RESUME OF SERVICE CAREER

Of

CLARENCE JOSEPH LANG, Major General

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: 28 June 1918, Iowa City, Iowa

YEARS OF ACTIVE SERVICE: Over 33 years

DATE OF RETIREMENT: 1 August 1973

MILITARY SCHOOLS ATTENDED

The Quartermaster School, Basic Course
Armed Forces Staff College
The Industrial College of the Armed Forces

EDUCATIONAL DEGREES

University of Iowa - BS Degree - Commerce
University of Texas - MBA Degree - Business Administration

CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF DUTY ASSIGNMENTS (Last 10 Years)

FROM	TO	ASSIGNMENTS
Jun 59	Jul 61	Trans Div Officer, J-4, OJCS
Jul 61	Nov 61	Spec Asst to Ch of Trans, DA
Nov 61	Jan 62	Dep Exec Dir, MTMA
Jan 62	Jun 63	Dep Cdr, Def Tr Mgt Svc
Aug 63	Oct 64	Asst Commandant, USATSCH
Oct 64	Jun 67	J-4 Strike Command
Jun 67	Mar 69	Ch of Staff, AMC
Apr 69	Jul 73	CG, MTMS

PROMOTION	DATES OF APPOINTMENT
2LT	24 May 1940

1LT	1	Nov	1941
CPT	1	Feb	1942
MAJ	18	Oct	1943
LTC	17	Sep	1944
COL	31	Mar	1955
BG	29	Sep	1963
MG	1	Jun	1967

MEDALS AND AWARDS

Distinguished Service Medal w/Oak Leaf Cluster

Legion of Merit w/Oak Leaf Cluster

SOURCE OF COMMISSION: ROTC (University of Iowa)

INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

Interview with **MG (Ret) Clarence Lang**

MG (Ret) Clarence Lang was interviewed 1 Dec 85 by CPT Lorae Bellina at **MG Lang**'s home in San Antonio, Texas.

MG Lang, in his interview, recalls his experiences as a truck company commander of the "M" Company, 28th Quartermaster Truck Regiment, in World War II. He describes of what each quartermaster truck regiment consisted, how they operated, where they were located, and how the soldiers were trained.

He speaks of trucking operations in the North African Campaign, particularly in the port of Oran. He describes the problems associated with the trucking operations and the solutions to the problems.

He describes the procedures that were developed to move the materials by truck from the port of Oran. He talks about port clearance, establishing dump sites for various classes of material, and moving the material from place to place.

He speaks of problems of maintenance, delays, breakdowns in communications and their solutions.

INTERVIEW

This is the Transportation Oral History interview conducted with MG (Ret) Clarence Lang on

1 December 1985 by CPT Lorae Bellina at **MG Lang**'s home in San Antonio, Texas. **MG Lang** was Commander, Company M, 28th Quartermaster Regiment, Truck, from 1942 until 1943. During this time, General Lang's unit was in direct support of the Port of Oran port clearance operations during the North African Campaign. **MG Lang** subsequently served as Executive Officer, 3rd Battalion, 28th Quartermaster Regiment; Executive Officer, 28th Quartermaster Group, and Commander, 28th Quartermaster Group before he returned to the US in September 1945.

MG Lang: First and foremost, I appreciate being included in the Amy Transportation Oral History Program, and I commend the Command Historian as well as the action officers who are putting this important program into effect. It should prove very useful in recording many important (and some not so important) events in Army Transportation history. The Chief of Staff of the Army's recent decision to reactivate the Chief of Transportation and other branch chief designations has my strong support. Accents such as the Amy Transportation Oral History Program may further strengthen the branch identification.

I want to emphasize at the outset that the material I am providing is from the memory of a then 24-year-old reserve captain with 2 1/2 years active duty. The recollections are 43 years old. I have no diaries, wartime notes, or letters to jog my memory. This lack of notes presents an element of danger because it is said that, when one has been on the morning report as long as I have, one's memory goes. The mind goes before the body is the way someone put it. While I admit that some of my actions of a month ago may evaporate temporarily from instant recall, I can still state the name, rank, and serial numbers of some of the men of M Company, 28th Quartermaster (QM) Truck Regiment, about whom we will be talking today.

Some actions and events are more vivid in my recollections than others; therefore, they will be addressed in more detail. Some details may be slightly inaccurate due to the ravages of time. No significance should be attached to the amount of coverage for one subject relative to another or to the omission of what may seem to some as a necessary subject. Similarly, my views and recollections will be those of a truck company commander and related from that experience, point of view, and time frame. Those views and recollections might be quite different from my later views as Commander, Naha Army Port, Okinawa, or in my final assignment as Commander, Military Traffic Management and Terminal Service. Many people tend to think that the statements of general officers never reflect a time other than when they held that rank. At a recent dinner party, I met a very charming and sharp elderly Army widow. In response to one of her questions, I mentioned that I had served in North Africa during World War II. "Oh," she said, "you served with my Tom." That's true in a broad sense, but "her Tom" was LTG Thomas Larkin, the senior quartermaster in the theater when I was a captain and a QM truck company commander. "It do make a difference," as the saying goes.

With that explanation of parameters and limitations on the scope of this presentation, let's proceed to the subject of our discussion.

CPT Bellina: **MG Lang**, you were assigned to a quartermaster truck regiment from March 1942 until September 1945. Will you give us a brief description of such a unit to set the stage for our subsequent specific questions?

MG Lang: As you probably know, the Amy Transport Service was placed under the Quartermaster Corps following World War I. In 1942, the Army troop list contained a number of QM truck regiments which provided line haul movement to meet the requirements of the assigned Army mission. Even after the creation of the Transportation Corps in July 1942, the designation of QM Truck Regiment was not changed, and we remained QM in name and staffing throughout World War II.

Each QM truck regiment consisted of a regimental headquarters and three battalions--each with a battalion headquarters and four truck companies. Each company had 50 cargo trucks, 2 1/2-ton GMC stake and platform trucks with a number of small, 3/4-ton trailers. These trucks were to become the workhorses of World War II. The normal operating requirement of each company was 40 cargo trucks for mission dispatch, eight trucks for maintenance or special assignment, and two trucks for company

maintenance, kitchen and supply. The full regiment provided a huge cargo-carrying capability.

During normal peacetime operations, the truck units in the active Amy were used as separate companies and were often assigned to a major Army headquarters. They were located at posts, camps and stations throughout the Continental United States (CONUS) and often attached to the senior organization located at that installation. A case in point was Company M, 28th QM Regiment, Truck, to which I was assigned in March 1942. Company M was assigned to Headquarters, Second Amy, Memphis, Tennessee, and attached to the 33d Infantry Division of the Illinois National Guard stationed at Camp Forrest, Tennessee. Our full-time duties included training and miscellaneous post missions. The 33d Infantry Division used us for support but did not rely on us in the discharge of its mission of training as an infantry division. The diverse locations of the truck companies caused operations with battalion and higher headquarters to be restricted to field maneuvers (like those conducted in the summer of 1941 and in the winter/spring of 1942) where convoy operations on maneuver and the mass movement of materiel were more practical. In the case of the 3d Battalion, 28th QM Regiment, I was told that battalion headquarters and the four companies participated in the 1941 maneuvers, but that was before I joined the unit.

At the time I joined the unit, however, the companies were so spread out geographically that separate company operations normally prevailed. Company I was encamped at Camp Livingston, Louisiana. I believe Companies K and L were both at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Battalion headquarters was at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and Company M was at Camp Forrest, Tennessee. In late April 1942, I received my first correspondence from 3d Battalion Headquarters--a request for a copy of my training schedule for Company M. At that time, I was conducting my own unit training consistent with Headquarters, Second Amy, directives.

In May 1942, the 3d Battalion Headquarters and all four companies assembled at Camp Blanding, Florida, to prepare for subsequent oversea movement--date unknown. It was said at the time that this was the first time a truck battalion headquarters was stationed at the same location with its four companies. Regimental headquarters also joined as did a portion of another battalion. No regimental commander had been appointed at that time, and the regimental staff was being constituted. That situation became painfully real when a good second lieutenant, whom I needed badly, was transferred from M Company to regimental headquarters. Our only activity was training each day. Battalion or Regimental Headquarters could not perform or assist in performing this function, so those higher headquarters really didn't function in their designated role. They did, however, take a more active interest in training schedules and personnel matters. In late June, the units of the 28th moved by train to the staging area. Upon arrival at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, we had the whole 28th QM Regiment, Truck, together at last and we finally sailed for North Ireland on I July 1942.

Several of the truck regiments with which I was familiar--the 22nd and 28th specifically--were staffed with white officers and black enlisted men consistent with the then current

Army personnel policy. This same staffing pattern had been followed for years in Army combat and service units such as the 2nd Cavalry Division, 9th and 10th Calvary Regiments, 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments, 92nd and 98th Engineer Regiments, and many antiaircraft artillery battalions. Some of these units were dis-established in World War II, and the personnel were used to create quartermaster truck and service units.

The methods for training the individual soldier of that era differed from those which prevail today. In several units with which I became familiar, and certainly in Company M, all soldier training was conducted by the company. The soldiers who enlisted or were inducted in the regular Army in 1941 were sent from the induction station, usually Camp Shelby, Mississippi, directly to the company in Camp Forrest, Tennessee. There they received all basic and unit training in the company. The serial numbers of the men of the company ranked consecutively from 34045404 to 34045440. They went to Camp Shelby for induction or enlistment, to Camp Forrest for basic and unit training, and on to Africa and Europe to do their jobs. Most of the men were from Mississippi and were from small towns. They learned the necessary skills from the regular Army personnel, who were representative of the old-time, regular Army graduates of the 9th and 10th Cavalry as well as the 24th and 25th Infantry. First Sergeant Homer P. Lott thought anyone in the company with less than three hitches was a recruit. He, SGT Weaver Brisco, and SGT Mack Davis were part of that regular Army cadre. The appropriate service units provided some specialized technical training for mechanics, cooks and bakers, and supply technicians. But I remember very few service school graduates.

CPT Bellina: Sir, the North African Campaign was a pioneering venture in wartime transportation operations. Little doctrinal guidance was available to assist in the conduct of port clearance operations and all the variables involved in effective transportation services. When your unit first arrived at the Port of Oran, did you have a clear understanding of the unit's mission?

MG Lang: When we sailed from Liverpool in early November 1942, we had no idea where we were going. We were at sea for some days before Africa and Oran were announced as our destination. Booklets on North Africa were distributed, but our mission was not actually discussed at that time. Before we landed, however, regimental headquarters assigned our specific mission, and we were briefed on the general operating area. We had no vehicles, only unit equipment, but we drew trucks early on from stocks that were shipped from CONUS or the United Kingdom (UK). We had no problem understanding our mission. Simply stated, we were to keep 40 cargo trucks operating day and night on port clearance.

We landed at Mers el Kabir, about eight miles west of Oran on D+3. We were pointed down the road towards Oran and told to start marching to the Port of Oran. It was night and we were in a strange country on a strange continent, but we were quite certain about the mission--port clearance as soon as the port could be made operational. Upon arrival at the port, we slept in the port sheds. The next morning, with sporadic fire going on in the area, we started port clearance in a rather macabre way. We helped recover, from the waters of the harbor, bodies of U.S. soldiers who died in the assault on the

port. The 1st Infantry Division had made the assault on Oran and incurred considerable casualties in the port area.

Shortly after we started our port clearance duties, the 1st Infantry Division was ordered to Tunisia, and our second mission developed as we began convoy operations to move the 1st to that area. We remained attached to that unit under the major headquarters of II Corps. This mission involved normal convoy operations as taught in the Amy schools and was not the individual dispatch common in the Oran port conduct. The 1st and 3rdBattalions, 28th QM Regiment, were assigned this mission to Tunisia, which also involved a large convoy carrying Air Corps ammo and petroleum, oils, and lubricants (POL) to a field just being established at Biskra on the edge of the Sahara Desert. These two convoy operations in November and December of 1942 were about the only times my unit operated in convoy rather than by individual truck dispatch. M Company moved elements of the 18th Infantry Regiment into a combat situation in Tunisia and retrieved the remnants of the unit after a serious loss a short time later. Other operations involved moving ammunition to and from ordnance depots.

On New Year's Eve, 1942, the 3d Battalion elements were relieved from assignment to II Corps and ordered back to Oran. Our 1st Battalion remained in Tunisia and never again rejoined the 28th QM Regiment. After the six-week period of conveying the combat units, we again became responsible for port clearance in the Port of Oran and that became our home-away-from-home for the next 19 months. The mission was clear--port clearance.

CPT Bellina: Sir, did you have the vehicles and personnel required to effectively perform this mission?

MG Lang: Operational vehicles and qualified drivers were always in short supply for around-the-clock port clearance missions. As you stated earlier, this was a pioneering venture in wartime operations. The tables of organization and equipment (TOEs) just didn't provide the personnel or materiel resources to cover prolonged use over a 24-hour-a-day basis. Our personnel problems involved a number of things.

One problem was unqualified personnel--no skill and even worse no aptitude to learn or no desire to move up. How the assignment personnel could get such men into a truck unit was one of our big mysteries. Added to this was another problem. I recall one man who was assigned to us as a filler from another organization. He was a good driver but his attitude was bad. His operation was bad. His appearance was bad. We finally were able to purge him from the company, and when he left, I talked to him, telling him that I would have to note his poor performance on his service record. His only remark was, "That's all right, sir, Captain, but just write in that service record that ol' Pope is going to be drinking."

Another problem was not enough people. Port operations ceased for about two hours early morning and early evening so that shifts could change. But the men still had at least a ten-hour shift. Forty trucks operated plus supply plus maintenance plus mess

plus administration, equalling zero reserves or less in manpower. My driver was often pressed into service because he was qualified to drive. The supply assistant had to drive. The platoon sergeants often drove on the swing shifts or on special missions. The solution to these problems was authorized over-strength, which was approved subsequently by higher headquarters and which provided us some good men from other organizations. We had a number of good men assigned to us and they were our salvation. I remember one of them in particular who drove a garbage truck in civilian life. He was a good driver and a good man, but even in Class A's (dress uniform) he still looked like a garbage man. In the over-strength personnel were some poor quality men, a number of them too, with poor discipline, adding to our supervisory and disciplinary problems.

Vehicle problems also added to our overall mass of adverse actions. City driving with high mortality rates for the vehicles kept us constantly exchanging vehicles with ordnance. The heavy usage and the almost standard practice of overloading as a fact of life created considerably more wear and tear than should have been allowed. Often a 5-ton load was the norm for a 2 1/2-ton truck. The stevedores, when they could, loaded a truck full and down even if the load was ammunition. There is no way that can work as standard practice. Our solutions involved developing good relations with ordnance, which was close to our regimental area. We had good organizational maintenance, and we had good relations with the port battalions that were loading our trucks. Only in these ways were we able to keep problems to a minimum, but we still had problems in both the personnel and vehicle areas.

CPT Bellina: Sir, during your tenure as company commander of the truck unit assigned to the Port of Oran, were you or your unit men instrumental in developing procedures for handling port cargo based on your firsthand experience?

MG Lang: I can't isolate any specific procedures we developed because so many things were done at the time to solve problems or to make for better port clearance operations. However, I will identify some general procedures. The motor pool area in the port was used by the dispatchers. Here, they could set up better control on the movements of the individual trucks as they departed shipside or the backlog areas for the appropriate depot. There were almost no convoy operations, except for class II (clothing and tentage) and post exchange (PX) items which might be guarded by the military police (MPs) as well as being convoyed. Drivers changed shift at approximately 0600 and 1800 in the port, and they were taken there en masse by company trucks, thereby ensuring that we had a driver-for-driver exchange. Meals were served during mid-shift at the port motor pool; in that way we kept contact with our drivers.

Another action we had to take was storing the tarps and bows that were a part of the truck because they were not used except for special operations. If they were on the trucks, they were lost or destroyed or they strayed (were stolen). We stored them in a port motor pool and, as necessary, reinstalled them in emergency cases. However, we generally operated bare and it worked better that way. We marked our trucks with the

regimental logo in large numbers in order to more easily identify them in all areas en route, in depots, and in unauthorized areas.

We had very close working relationships with the port battalions with whom we worked in both Oran and subsequently in Marseilles. The 397th and the 399th port battalions were our comrades, which had both good and bad results. It gave us better working relationships, but it provided the man who opposed the system an opportunity to work up cliques and schemes against it. That was a problem area.

We disregarded the use of the 3/4-ton trailers for depot hauls. They had a relatively small cargo-carrying capacity and it just took too long to load and offload them. We used the trucks alone as a general rule.

CPT Bellina: Sir, did your chain of command, that is, your higher headquarters, ever solicit your ideas on ways to improve port clearance procedures?

MG Lang: I really can't say that I remember higher headquarters ever soliciting ideas to improve port clearance procedures. We, at the company level , were fortunate however in having top-notch working relationships with our higher headquarters.

When we needed help and requested it, our higher headquarters could be very effective in presenting our case to the base section headquarters if the problem couldn't De solved at battalion or regiment. Also, the officers in the higher headquarters had served with the regiment in lesser capacities and knew the members in the company. Case in point, when it became obvious that our manpower could not indefinitely support the truck requirement of 40 operational trucks per shift, day and night. An over-strength authorization was secured and replacements were made available from units which were dis-established; that is the 92d Engineers, the 2d Cavalry Division, or other units with men who had driver qualification or potential. Our chain of command kept close to the transportation element in the base section and worked for us.

Our battalion commander was a building contractor in civilian life, and he drew the plans and bills of material for the battalion layout with framed tents, orderly rooms, mess halls, supply rooms, and motor pools. These structures, made with the scrap lumber dunnage from the port, immeasurably improved the regiment's living and working conditions. Our original regimental commander became the transportation officer at the base section headquarters and was most sympathetic and helpful to our needs.

From day one, we made improvements and continued to make them throughout the 19 months in Oran, and port clearance was greatly improved. However, I can't say who should be identified as the originator of any of the particular procedures or methods that we used.

CPT Bellina: Sir, back piling of cargo, that is the temporary storage of cargo in the port area, was not practiced in the early stages of port clearance but later became necessary. Can you explain why this concept developed?

MG Lang: I'm sure that back piling developed as a standard practice because there was a sustained greater input into the port complex from the ships than there was port clearance output into the depots. The port operators must have seen this imbalance and, not wanting to hold up the critical shipping, decided that certain classes of supply could be offloaded to a point of temporary rest in the port. Later, these supplies could be loaded into the bed of a truck and subsequently into the depot. Naturally, ammo and POL would be exempt from the categories that could be backlogged. Sometimes the back piles were huge, but they could be worked off during relative lulls in cargo receipts or when additional port clearance vehicles became available.

I think your earlier comment about this being a pioneering venture has a bearing, as we were all learning and developing standing operating procedures (SOPs) as we went along. The back piles gave the truck units a ready reserve of cargo that could be worked as opportune cargo to fill -relatively inactive periods. Back piling, as such, was developed for the benefit of port operators; however, it benefited the truck units as well. When the back piles did definitely constrict movement on the piers and other open areas, they did not affect our work adversely.

CPT Bellina: So, sir, how did back piling affect your unit's ability to conduct port clearance operations?

MG Lang: Since, in some cases, excessive turnaround times to the various depots did create bottlenecks at shipside, creation of back piles really benefited our port clearance operations rather than hampering them. Often at most Class I (subsistence items) depots and the ammunition depots, the lack of unloading bays and personnel tied up trucks far beyond the normal allotted time. At such times, there could be far more cargo at the ships than had been planned. If the type or class of cargo was susceptible to back piling in port, it was efficient to do so, considering the alternative of delaying the ship. Sometimes, it was not unusual for our trucks to be days rather than hours unloading, due to the overloading at the depots. Our protests were effective sometimes, but many times they were not helpful since there just was no valid operational reason why the depot couldn't off-load the trucks. These problems may have impacted on our tonnage figures for the day or week, but keeping a book on tonnage haul really wasn't the name of the game.

We had a good working relationship with the depot operators, and we tried, generally, to share each other's problems. However, I recall one case in which our relationship with the depot commander was not particularly good. In Tunisia, I hauled a convoy of ammunition into an ordnance depot. The commanding officer of that depot ordered me to turn in my trucks for subsequent reissue to a higher priority organization. I was not in the habit of saying no to colonels, but I said no because I didn't think it was a logical or legal order. He threatened me with court-martial and I still said no, but I advised the commander of the 18th Infantry Regiment, to whom I was attached, of the problem. He told me to disregard the order. The next day, an officer delivered a message from the colonel saying that I would be court-martialed if I did not come in with the vehicles. I did not and I have not, to this day, heard anything further. Exceptions such as this were

probably due to stress, but there were characters who tried such things and I, unfortunately, ran into one of them.

CPT Bellina: Sir, did oversize equipment hamper your ability to provide effective transportation services at the port?

MG Lang: Certainly the movement of oversize cargo from the port created problems but somehow they were solved. Special trailers were often available for oversize cargo or, in some cases, the oversize equipment was back piled in port until a solution was found. I don't recall that oversize cargo was a major, recurring problem. I'm sure oversize and heavy-lift cargo was a problem for the port operators as well as the depots, but I don't recall that cargo being a major problem in our port clearance operations.

Weight overload was a major problem for us, however, and was often used by the port operators in disregard of good, long-term practice. Naturally, there was a direct conflict between the needs of the stevedores to quickly unload their cargo and our needs to keep the truck loads within reason for the long-term safety and operability of the trucks. Sometimes, the base section headquarters authorized the overload on a temporary basis. However, I am sure this was done for a spot requirement and was terminated after a short period of time.

CPT Bellina: Sir, did your drivers have adequate training in cargo security procedures upon arrival at the Port of Oran?

MG Lang: No, I don't think we had stressed cargo security procedures for the individual in enough detail or breadth. The vast majority of training had been on driver training and maintenance--convoy operations with tight control over the trucks and cargo. No one really seemed to envision trucks operating in a city environment such as Oran with individual dispatch to various depots that required passage through neighborhoods not conducive to cargo security. Our drivers were generally competent as drivers and able to perform operator's maintenance, and sometimes higher-level maintenance, on the vehicles. But many fell short on cargo security. Of course, in some cases, they were the cause of the cargo security problems, either by sins of omission or commission. The close rapport with the port battalions, over a time, did nothing to dispel this environment that was conducive to cargo security problems. We took as decisive action as possible to break up cliques that were counterproductive to cargo security. Several court-martials were related to these actions. I don't know that we found a 100 percent solution to the cargo security problem. But increased training in Oran, as well as command and control improvements, reduced the magnitude of the infractions. These involved the company commander, the platoon lieutenants, the platoon sergeants, and the battalion staff being on continuous patrol over the routes between the port and the depot. As I stated earlier, we developed a distinctive logo for our trucks and large identification (ID) numbers on the trucks in order to identify them during these patrols.

CPT Bellina: Sir, did refresher training in this area then pose problems based upon the mission requirements and the time constraints?

MG Lang: While we kept an active training program in effect throughout our time in Oran, the constraints of time and personnel did inhibit the effectiveness of the training. I must say the attitude and makeup of the individual soldier also had a great impact. The expression about the silk purse and the sow's ear is apropos. If a man had inherent criminal or antisocial inclinations, he could rather effectively disregard all training and guidance. It was then up to the officers and the NCOs to identify him, isolate him, catch him, and try him. We had a few men of this type, but most of the men, who often came from the same background, were honest and diligent in their work. It was a strange fact that much of our problem with cargo security and other dereliction came from the men assigned to us as over-strength in Oran to solve our manpower shortage problems. It seems we solved one problem and created another one. Training in cargo security continued throughout our service in Africa and later in the South of France, where the problem continued and, indeed, intensified.

CPT Bellina: Sir, once dump sites were established for the various classes of cargo, did your unit find this change in procedure a benefit to overall operations?

MG Lang: Dump sites seemed a good idea and did simplify our command and control. The various technical services with responsibility tried to ensure that their operations were efficient, safe, and proper. When convoys were used (due to the class of the cargo move), it helped when there were specific depots by class. Turnaround time was always a problem and always foremost in our minds. It seemed that the separate dump sites were a plus in solving the turnaround problem.

CPT Bellina: Sir, were the various dump sites easily found around the port?

MG Lang: The dumps got to be some distance from the port. As they grew in size, their location would move farther out. The sites were readily accessible even if they were not near the port. Oran was a sizable city, and the dumps were beyond the built-up areas of the city as well as in the large warehouses in and around the port complex. Of course, those in or near the port complex were used first. Then, it was a question of working out from the center in order to accommodate the class of supply with the distance factors necessary for safe operations.

CPT Bellina: Sir, once the drivers arrived at the designated dump site, how was the cargo off-loaded?

MG Lang: Unloading at the dumps for all classes of supply was provided by the operator. In some cases, the drivers did assist to facilitate turnaround time of the truck. Labor troops of various technical services were used, civilians were used, and, I believe, in late 1943 and 1944 Italian prisoners of war were used. Much unloading was done by hand, by crane, and some by materials handling equipment (MHE).

CPT Bellina: So, was MHE readily available if requested?

MG Lang: I don't recall whether the availability of materials handling equipment was a problem or not. We didn't use it, and I can't say whether the dumps had much available or if its absence was a problem. In some cases, the absence of adequate MHE could have added to the turnaround problem, but I'm not aware that such shortages were a major problem.

CPT Bellina: Sir, my research indicates that the Class I dump warehouse at the Port of Oran had an inside loading platform that could accommodate only two trucks at one time, forcing other vehicles to wait. Was it common for the incoming volume of cargo to outnumber the capacity to off-load at destination?

MG Lang: It was quite common for the incoming cargo to exceed the off-loading capacity. Trucks would often be held in several dumps for many hours, even into the next day. On some occasions, we changed drivers in place at the dump because the truck was in a holding pattern waiting to off-load. The dispatcher for the battalion in the port had a log showing when the driver left the port for the dump. If it was known that the driver was in a backlog, his relief driver was actually taken to the dump. We used such occasions to encourage the dump operators to expedite off-loading where possible. Our patrols, officers and NCOs generally, had a pretty accurate list of the problem areas and the trucks and drivers so held up. Battalion and regimental personnel were also very helpful in getting additional pressure on those dumps that were consistently holding vehicles for an excessive period.

CPT Bellina: Sir, did this type situation cause problems with vehicle dead time while waiting to on- or off-load?

MG Lang: Anytime the trucks were held up at the port to on-load or at the dump to off-load there was a waste of a valuable and scarce commodity--truck movement capability. Cargo moved over to shipside and out of port warehouses about 20 hours of a 24-hour period, everyday. Often there were no bottlenecks and a near-perfect school solution was achieved. Yet, on some other occasions, there were lines of trucks waiting to be loaded at the port while there were lines of trucks waiting to be off-loaded at the dumps. All the coordination, good intention, and plans in the theater did not seem to stop this waste. We worked constantly on the problem but we couldn't eliminate it.

CPT Bellina: Sir, how did mechanical difficulties disrupt the operations timetable?

MG Lang: Maintenance difficulties did exist, of course. With a float of 8 trucks out of 48 cargo vehicles assigned, we were able to keep the problem in check. But as time wore on and the vehicles aged under the severe stress of long hours, greater maintenance difficulties did arise. I'm sure the overloading practice of prolonged service contributed to this. Our company maintenance section was not large, but it was able. On several occasions, I was not able to meet M Company's quota of 40 trucks for a short period, but by and large, I believe we did meet the quota with our normal, assigned vehicles.

CPT Bellina: Sir, what type of maintenance support did your unit have?

MG Lang: Our company provided the organization maintenance and ordnance took over after that. Our mechanics were skilled and dedicated. They remained with us throughout the war. Ordnance support was excellent, and our relations were very good. Our problem was getting assistance in securing rapid replacement of salvageable wrecked vehicles. I believe our maintenance people and ordnance did an outstanding job under adverse conditions.

CPT Bellina: Sir, was unit-level training conducted with any regularity?

MG Lang: Working under our demanding daily schedule, we found it difficult to conduct unit training. We did, however, schedule and conduct training during the break periods when the drivers shifted from day to night shift and vice versa. Regimental headquarters drew up the schedules with some input from the battalions and the training was conducted as best we could. Soldier schooling, battalion and regimental parades, cargo security classes, follow-up driver instruction, and guard duty allowed us to maintain some semblance of soldiering experience. Vehicle care and driving skills were always stressed in training. It occurred to me at the time, and it does again now, that more emphasis on these subjects with stress on individual operations would have been far more productive than the time spent on convoys in the hills of Tennessee during CONUS operations. There were time conflicts, and in some cases, the training was not as long or as productive as desired.

CPT Bellina: Sir, what was your unit's work schedule in a 24-hour period?

MG Lang: The port operations were our governing clock. Day operations began about 0600 after a two-hour break. During the two-hour break, our day-shift was delivered to the port motor pool to exchange with the night-shift drivers who had returned to port from the dumps. As earlier stated, other switches were made at the dumps or other locations on vehicles that were caught in the off-loading backlog. Shift drivers were fed at the port motor pool at noon and those not back in port were fed on location if necessary. Port operations ceased for personnel change about 1600, so the night-shift drivers were taken into port about 1800. A midnight meal was provided at the port motor pool. This requirement repeated itself everyday. The hours during which the port did not operate were not as precise as I've indicated, but there were two cease periods of the day at about the time I've indicated so that we could change shifts. Port operations personnel also changed shifts at these times. After ten days to two weeks on this schedule, a swing shift of drivers was worked in so that the day drivers could switch to night. During the time off before reporting to the new shift ' the drivers pulled guard, had unit training, were eligible for pass, and took care of other usual administrative actions. This switch of drivers between shifts, while providing some free time and time for normal company activities, was very much of a personal problem. To secure the needed swing-shift personnel, we had to use all qualified truck drivers: platoon sergeants, my driver, the assistant in the supply room, and others were tasked for shift driving duty. At such times, we took strong exception to those who assigned non-drivers or, worse yet, non-trainable non-drivers to a truck unit. It was a great relief when some months later we were assigned over-strength drivers at our urging.

Unfortunately, the losing units made sure that we didn't receive the cream of the crop in the Army. Our percentage of disciplinary problems increased proportionately to the percentage of increase in strength.

CPT Bellina: Sir, were communication means adequate to provide command and control to your unit during daily operations?

MG Lang: Our command and control was highly personal, conducted by officers and NCOs in 1/4-ton vehicles. We had road patrols out at all hours on all routes from the port to the dumps. They also patrolled the streets near the battalion area since the trucks were known to show up off route adjacent to bars and other houses of interest. Dispatch records at our port motor pool were checked each shift to see what amount of time was being taken for a run to and from each dump. Problem dumps were visited by the patrols, by company and battalion officers, as well as the staff.

CPT Bellina: Sir, what type of communications did you use most frequently?

MG Lang: As I stated earlier, personal supervision was the usual command and control. We had field phones set up where possible and maintained close contact between the battalion area, which was on the edge of town, and the port motor pool.

CPT Bellina: Sir, are there any other significant subject areas concerning clearance operations at the Port of Oran that you would like to mention?

MG Lang: There was one operation conducted there that I particularly want to mention, since I feel it was one of the great moves of the war. In my viewpoint, one of the greatest successes was the use of motor transportation by Italian prisoner-of-war truck battalions--the 7040th and 7041st. They were created as replicas of a standard American Army quartermaster truck battalion, with 2 1/2-ton GMC trucks. The 7040th was a satellite of the 3d Battalion, 28th QM Regiment, and occupied an area at the edge of our camp. An Italian Army lieutenant was the liaison between the 7040th and our organization and he, in fact, ran that battalion. Their personnel operated in the port area just as we did, without guard, and effectively operated as another battalion of the QM regiment. They loved their trucks, they maintained them, and they were good operators. Their discipline was superior, morale was high, accident rate was low, maintenance was high, and tonnage was up to par. They were no security risk. They loved being in a rear area, and they weren't about to do anything to jeopardize that. We had several officers who spoke Italian and that sealed it. It was a pleasure to work with them. Whoever decided to create these units had one of the better ideas of World War II.

CPT Bellina: And, sir, in closing, do you have any other comments to make on port clearance operations overall?

MG Lang: Whenever I consider the amount of tonnage moved through the Port of Oran during this time frame, I am staggered. Port facilities had been very good but were

severely damaged before and during our invasion. As you stated earlier, this was a pioneering venture in military port operations in World War II. Much was learned as we went along. Port clearance was a prime factor in the operation, since the cargo isn't shipped to remain in port. I think an outstanding transportation operation was conducted there, and I'm happy to have been a very small part of it. Unfortunately, the cost in vehicles and equipment was very high.

CPT Bellina: Sir, do you have anything to say in conclusion?

MG Lang: Although at the beginning of this discussion I stressed that information and opinions would be stated considering the time frame of my experience, my rank, my opinions, and the situation of the early 1940's, I do now want to use some 20/20 hindsight in conclusion. My favorite quotation has been used often over many years, probably to the discomfort of many students of the Transportation School and/or members of my various staffs. The quotation goes something like this, "God and the soldier we adore. In time of danger even more. The danger passed and all things righted. God is forgotten and the soldier slighted." It is my fervent hope that the men of Company M, 28th QM Regiment, Truck, about whom we've been speaking today, have not been slighted--not by me, not by the United States government, and not by the citizens of the United States wherever their chosen spot in life has taken them. While I don't want to glorify them unseemingly, I believe they did their job consistent with their abilities. They did it well. In my book you can't say a better thing about a soldier than that. To then, in appreciation, I say, "Keep on trucking. God love you."

CPT Bellina: General Lang, thank you.